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LEARNING FROM KING DAVID'S FAILURE

By Jim Newheiser

From the series: Articles

Topics: Depression, Sex, Sexual Abuse, Work

Charles was a highly respected pastor. The church he planted many years ago has survived some hard times and is now flourishing. He is well respected in his denominational circles. He is a popular conference speaker and he has even published several articles and one book. His family seems exemplary. He has

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been happily married for twenty-five years and he and his wife have successfully raised their four children, the last of whom starts college next year. We were shocked last week when we heard that Charles had been caught in a pattern of adultery and deceit and had been removed from office. How could such a thing happen to a man who seemed to have it all together, who had successfully passed through the temptations of his younger years, who seemed to have everything a minister could want? Does this mean that his entire ministry had been a lie? Are the books, articles and tapes he produced worthless? Or did something happen to take a man who had been qualified and used of God and ruin him?

Stephen is a lay leader in his church. He has a lovely wife with whom he has enjoyed a close relationship. He has been very successful in his business. He is knowledgeable in the Scriptures, is involved in the life of the church, and is leading Bible studies discipling younger men. He has been close to his pastor for many years. Imagine his pastor's grief when Stephen's wife came for counsel complaining she has found evidence Stephen has returned to the excessive drinking of his pre-conversion days. Also, she has caught him viewing pornography on the Internet. Most evenings he comes home from work and sits in front of the television. He doesn't interact with his children and he is very distant from his wife.

Modern people would say Charles and Stephen are exhibiting the classic symptoms of the "Mid-life Crisis". Their experience is not, however, unique or particularly modern. What happened to Charles and Stephen is similar to what happened to King David in II Samuel 11-12. David seemed to have achieved his life's goals. He had been greatly used of God. He was truly a man after God's own heart. Yet in middle age, he fell into sin and brought disgrace upon himself and trouble to the people of God. Studying David's fall and restoration will give us insight as to how a man can fall into a mid-life crisis, the heart problems behind it, and how we can help the man who is struggling.

How does a godly man fail in mid-life?

Different phases of life present different challenges. Youthful lusts may give way to the dissatisfied boredom of mid-life. Both are equally dangerous.

A. No more worlds to conquer. David's fall in II Samuel 11 is alarming. His life's goals have, for the most part, been achieved. His domestic enemies have been vanquished and he is securely established on the throne as king over all Israel (II Sam. 1-4). The Philistines, Arameans, Moabites and Edomites have been subdued (II Sam. 8,10). The ark of the covenant has entered Jerusalem (II Sam. 6). He has multiple wives of beauty and at least one of character (Abigail). Yet David's success may have provided the circumstances, which led to his great sin.

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Alexander the Great is said to have wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. It appears that David's most glorious victories were behind him.

B. Facing his limitations. After conquering the land, he sought to embark on one more grand project. He aspired to see the temple built in Jerusalem, but God revealed that this honor would go to his son (II Sam. 7:1-2,12-13). David's life had settled down to administering the kingdom he had established. There were no more great dreams to be realized in his lifetime.

C. Lethargy sets in. "Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel. But David stayed at Jerusalem" (II Sam. 11:1). Like many driven men, David appears to have functioned better in the midst of great challenges. Once his kingdom was established, he seemed to lose heart for his life's work. The defeat of the sons of Ammon wouldn't add much to his already illustrious record as a warrior.

Perhaps David decided that he had already fought in his share of battles. Now he had underlings whom he could send in his place to fight his wars. As King, he could still receive the glory for the conquest without having to go to the field.

D. Idleness and boredom lead to temptation. David's lack of attention to his calling put him in a situation in which he was vulnerable to the temptation which resulted in his wicked liaison with Bathsheeba.

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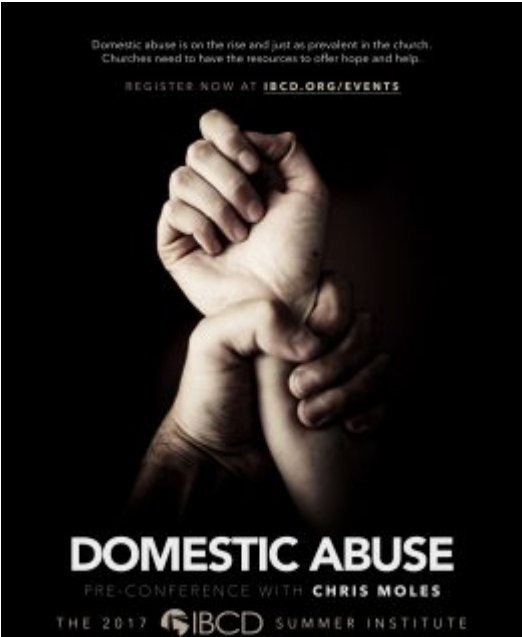
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